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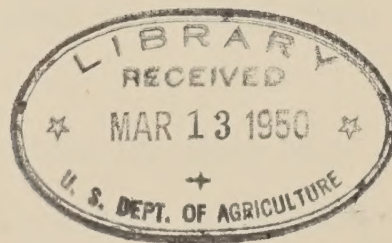
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Agricultural Economics

BROADCASTING

MARKET

NEWS

A GUIDE FOR MARKET NEWS WORKERS



Washington, D. C.
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BROADCASTING MARKET NEWS 1/

A GUIDE FOR MARKET NEWS WORKERS

A PROPHECY

"As a means of getting market information to the country the radio is growing quite popular. This sort of service is still in an experimental stage, but gives promise of great future developments and usefulness." U. S. Department of Agriculture Yearbook, 1922.

FIFTEEN YEARS LATER

Probably 50 percent of all farm homes are equipped with radio, the proportion being highest where the average farm-family income is highest or where most families have high-line electric service. The 1930 Census reported that 1,500,000 farm homes, 25 percent of the total, were equipped with radio. Sales of radios to farmers in 1936 totaled 1,065,000 sets, and the estimate for 1937 is 1,200,000 sets.

The Rural Electrification Administration reports that radio is the first appliance wanted, above all others, in newly electrified farm homes.

To serve radio-equipped farm families, more than 180 radio stations are now broadcasting daily market reports prepared by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

^{1/} Prepared by E. J. Rowell, Radio Specialist, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, in collaboration with the Radio Service of the Department of Agriculture and market news divisions of the Bureau.

MARKET NEWS

The aim of the market news service has been defined as follows:

"The objectives of the market news service are to facilitate the flow of commodities to markets where they are the most needed and to place farmers and dealers on an equal bargaining basis.

"It is reasonable to suppose that in providing market reports Congress had in mind the desire to aid producers directly by familiarizing them with the prices being paid for their commodities in various markets. . . . While the quotation of prices is the most emphasized phase of the work, there is reason to believe that other information on price-making forces, disseminated by the market news service, is quite as important in regulating the flow of commodities to markets."

Remember this:

One of the difficulties the producer of almost any commodity encounters is a lack of accurate, unbiased, and timely information. The market news service of the Department of Agriculture is an absolutely unbiased reporting service seeking to provide accurate and timely information for all interests alike. The only interest that a Government market reporter has is to learn the facts as they exist and to convey the information as clearly as possible to all who have need for it.

IMPORTANCE TO FARMERS OF RADIO MARKET NEWS

From the time the scientists and engineers first made it possible to send out information and entertainment by radio transmission, and the manufacturers began to provide less expensive receiving sets for use in millions of homes, the new method of communication has proved of highest importance to farm families. In the past farm families have lacked rapid means of keeping in touch with what goes on in the business world, the political world, the world of government, the world of culture.

This isolation of farm families in the pre-radio days was described by President Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission 30 years ago. That Commission held that the enforced isolation of the farm home was one of the highest barriers in the path toward the good life for farm families. It kept them from bargaining on even terms with the city man in business. It kept them from enjoying the same educational, religious and cultural advantages as the city families.

But with the coming of radio this isolation and its effects have largely disappeared among the families who are able to equip their homes with receiving sets. Our service to the radio-equipped homes lies in removing the disadvantage of lack of speedy information service on what takes place in the markets where the farmers' products are sold. We broadcast market information in order to make it of the greatest possible service to the farm families of the nation.

Obviously, as more farm homes are equipped with receiving sets, this service the Bureau renders to American agriculture will increase. Market news officers of the Bureau should keep this fact always before them. They are more justified now in making efforts to send out market news by radio than they ever were before because far more farm families now have radio receiving sets.

In 1930 the Census reported that one farm home out of every four contained a radio set in active operation. The total was one and one-half million receiving sets on farms. In 1936 and 1937 alone, more than two million receiving sets have been sold to farm families. Probably one farm home in every two in the whole country now contains a receiving set in active operation. Furthermore, nearly every farm on which the crop and livestock production is on a commercial basis--farms from which the products are sold at central markets rather than bartered locally--now has a radio receiving set and keeps informed about the markets.

Each survey that asks whether or not agricultural radio audiences listen to market news broadcasts provides additional testimony to the value of such service. In a recent survey in California more than half of those replying said they listened to the market news broadcasts.

A country-wide survey conducted 2 years ago, by a competent organization, showed that over 43 percent of the 9,000 farmers who replied to the questionnaire said they obtain their market information from radio broadcasts. It further showed that Federal or State Government reports are received through the mail by more than 25 percent of the reporting farmers, but few farmers rely entirely on these reports because of the unavoidable delay in obtaining them. The survey emphasizes the importance of speed and timeliness. Radio is the medium best adapted to supply these requirements.

An official of a stockyard who formerly solicited shipments to one of the large livestock markets said, "I was one of the first persons to have a radio in an automobile. I had to have it. Otherwise when I drove into a man's yard he could tell me things about the market I represented that I did not know. I got my information by wire before starting out, but by the time I arrived at some of the farms they had later news by radio."

COVERAGE

When broadcasting, emphasis should be placed upon the products in which there is an immediate interest in the area served.

Coverage is important in reaching rural areas. For this reason, service to rural areas is the basis of awarding high power to certain stations. Frequently one high-power station will serve a given area better than a dozen or more low-power stations located in the same territory.

Neither power nor frequency (location on the dial) provides an accurate basis for measuring the coverage of a radio station, because other factors have to be taken into consideration, such as topography, mineral deposits, and directional antennae. In a general way, however, the higher the power the better the coverage; with equal power, lower frequency (at low part of the dial) gives better coverage than equal power with higher frequency (near the top of the dial). Most stations will provide intensity charts upon request. These charts are the result of accurate mechanical tests of the intensity of the signal of that radio station.

The broadcasts of the reports issued by any office should cover both the area of production and the area surrounding the market on which the product is sold.

POLICIES AND STATION RELATIONS

Policies and station relations are so closely related as to warrant their discussion together.

Radio stations are required to operate in "the public interest, convenience, and necessity." Where the rural listeners of the station need information that the Bureau can provide for broadcast, radio stations should carry these reports as a public service. In those places where it is impossible for the Bureau to supply the needed information quickly for the best use of the farm audience, thus making it necessary for the radio station to purchase the material from an intermediary, we should insist that the material shall not be altered from the form in which it is supplied.

All relations between the Bureau and the radio station should be direct. The most satisfactory arrangements for time and facilities are made in this way, rather than through a commercial or commodity organization.

If other agricultural programs are being presented over the same station, it is essential for the market news man to cooperate with the man or men responsible for the other agricultural programs. These men may be representatives of State departments of agriculture or State agricultural colleges. In many, if not most, cases the manager of the radio station knows little about the needs of the agricultural audience, and this little knowledge becomes confused if he is approached by two, or three, or more individuals for time for radio programs.

The Bureau does not favor commercial sponsorship of broadcasts of news or other information it issues. Sponsorship might be construed as implying Government approval of the firm or its products, whereas the Bureau cannot approve or disapprove firms or products. Sponsorship might lead to censorship of the information broadcast.

"Commercially sponsored radio programs" are not interpreted to include those broadcasts where a stockyard company or similar organization pays the line charges in order that the market information may be conveyed to the radio station and thence to the radio audience at the earliest possible moment.

Any attempt to supplant or interfere with the dissemination of information, or the addition of statements urging shippers to send to a designated market, by companies that pay line charges or by other commercial organizations should be brought to the attention of this office.

Morse Salisbury, Chief of Radio Service, Department of Agriculture, states: "The licensees have an obligation, acknowledged tacitly and openly in the industry testimony and brief at the FCC hearings on Section 307(c) of the Communications Act of 1934 to carry market news as a public service. Asking the stations to carry market news as a public service does not in my view constitute a denial of public information to any advertiser. It constitutes simply a request that the broadcast licensee cooperate with this Department in serving citizens who own radio sets, thus meeting their responsibility in operating in the public interest, convenience and necessity."

Under date of September 7, John R. Fleming, Acting Director of the Office of Information, issued the following memorandum to the Bureau Chiefs:

"A radio problem likely to concern a growing number of Department offices and officials has lately become so insistent that I think you ought to know about it.

"During the past 10 years or more the Department and cooperating State agencies have been broadcasting informational programs which by now command very large farm audiences. These programs have been sent out by licensed broadcasting stations and networks as a matter of public service. We have always made our arrangements for these broadcasts direct with the licensed broadcasters and the networks.

"Now, however, proposals are coming to us that such programs be sponsored by commercial firms, or that new informational programs be started with advertisers paying for the time and the Department and other Federal and State agencies providing official information.

"Broadcasting under such arrangements would of course violate Department Regulation 1215, prohibiting endorsement of commercial products by Department employees, and Regulation 1231, prohibiting the appearance of Department employees in commercially sponsored radio broadcasts except for the issuance of emergency information on such matters as forest fire control.

"I am not writing, however, to call your attention to regulations with which I am sure you are already familiar, but rather to suggest that what is really at stake is the control, insofar as radio is concerned, of the dissemination of information developed by public agencies. If the Department once accepted the principle that it should look to advertisers for access to radio transmission facilities, farmers and other citizens could get information from the Department by radio only as long as it paid advertisers to allow us to use radio. We cannot set up our own radio station; we cannot even buy time on the air. We must, therefore, look to the licensed broadcasters for access to transmitting facilities. Thus far, they have cooperated with us on the ground that by so doing they serve public convenience and necessity, which they are required to do as a condition of using a frequency. If we now permit the beginnings of commercial sponsorship, the broadcasters will have reason to think that all of our information programs may as well be sponsored commercially. If it develops, however, that advertisers see no profit in sponsoring certain of our programs, then those programs have precious little chance of staying on the air. The decision, under commercial sponsorship, rests with the sponsor, not with the program makers.

I hope you will feel the situation important enough to caution both the Washington and field officers of your Bureau against appearing personally in commercially sponsored radio programs, or supplying information exclusively for such programs. Commercial firms are of course entitled to the publications of the Department just as are any other citizens, but they are not entitled to supplant or interfere with either radio or press in disseminating information prepared and issued by the Department as a public service."

Remember to:

Keep the Division of Economic Information informed as to radio relations.

SUGGESTIONS ON WRITING FOR RADIO

What you write for broadcast purposes becomes the spoken words of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics; by these words the Bureau and the Department of Agriculture are judged.

Good judgment, therefore, spurs one to build vocabulary, to hunt always for the simple but effective word, to review grammar and rhetoric, read widely, and listen to able contemporaries.

Always strive for clarity. This applies to your choice of words as well as sentence construction. When you mean "hens" or "chickens", say so. When you mean "chicks", say so.

"To be used they must be understood." It makes little difference whether this statement is applied to published reports or to radio reports, the terms used as they apply to grades, supply, demand, and market conditions must be understood beyond any possible doubt.

Lower top price may be caused by a lack of real top-quality offerings or by actually changed market conditions. Be sure you get the facts across. Here, radio has an opportunity not enjoyed by the printed report. The use of a simple explanatory sentence is an easy matter in a radio broadcast. Keep in mind that the broadcast is just a simple, friendly message from the market news man to an interested farmer.

In the preparation of material for market news for broadcasting, it is as essential to present a summary of market conditions as it is to tell the audience the subject to be discussed when a straight talk is being given.

Phraseology.- Broadcasts are not prepared for large audiences. Rather they are prepared as a message from you to an individual farmers. You are an invited guest in the farmer's home.

Use short, simple sentences.

Avoid the use of complex figures. Figures are essential in market news but must be so prepared and given as to avoid any possibility of misinterpretation. Where large figures are used, as in crop reports, say "about 41 million" rather than "40,979,425."

Avoid terms that, although common around the market, may not be known to the farmer.

Don't be afraid to repeat. Remember the listener can neither look back nor look ahead.

The following phrases illustrate some of the general principles, and emphasize the important fact that agricultural radio talks are addressed to farmers as individuals and are not just abstract statements of facts:

"I have some facts for fruit and tobacco growers", instead of "I have some facts on the fruit and tobacco situation."

"Farmers have raised a big crop as a result of--", instead of "Heavy production has been caused by."

"Prices went up because", instead of "The increase in price is due to."

"Growers or farmers are sending normal amounts of produce to market", instead of "Normal marketings."

"Dairy farmers have been", instead of "The dairy farmer has been."

"American spinners have to import cotton of some types. These are types that our growers don't produce, or don't produce enough of to supply the demand", instead of "Most of the cotton imported into this country either differs in quality from American cotton or is needed to supplement cotton qualities not produced in sufficient volume to meet our needs."

It is frequently better to present the highlights in clear, understandable language than it is to try to cover the whole market hurriedly.

It is well to summarize at the conclusion as well as at the start.

Remember that:

The day of "anything goes" is gone. You are giving information of dollars-and-cents value to the farmer, but you must give it in usable form. A market news broadcast may not be entertaining, but it can be interesting. Your market news broadcast competes with plenty of good shows for the listener's attention. The station does not want programs that drive listeners away, and you want the market news broadcast to have listeners.

Most of the market news broadcasts, because of their very nature, can best be presented as a simple story of the market conditions and prices.

Form.- The dialogue form may be used to advantage upon occasion. A daily market-news broadcast can, at best, tell only part of the story--radio time does not generally permit all the details found on a mimeographed report. Either in connection with the market-news broadcasts or through the use of additional broadcast periods, it is well to give the listener a picture of the market, its facilities, hours and methods of doing business, etc. Occasionally it has been possible to arrange with a radio station to provide a special broadcast direct from the market. Such a broadcast does two things--it tells the producers just how their products are handled and gives the consumers a new and better understanding of the problems involved in giving us our daily food.

Competition.- The usual market report gives information on each commodity as a unit. Additional information covering the whole market picture can be given by radio--interesting side-lights that help the farmer to know more about the market. These things do not have a place on mimeographed reports. For example, the market report may comment on the supply, demand, and price for the offerings of apples, without any explanation that the price being received for that product is determined, at least in part, by the price of competing fruits. The competition between two fruits (similar commodities) or a dairy and a livestock product may have as much to do with determining the price and market condition as the actual supply and demand for the product discussed.

Be sure to state the basis of quotations used. Are they wholesale or jobbing prices? If the wholesale price is given, it is well to mention, at least occasionally, the minimum number of packages that may be purchased at the price quoted. Tell the listener whether the quotations are based on actual sales or whether they are nominal quotations.

Market news broadcasts should include available information on price-making factors, outlook, intentions to plant, crop conditions, and storage holdings, with perhaps some general statement on shipments of commodities that are of particular local interest. These commodities may be the same as those produced locally or they may be competing products of another kind. They should, in so far as possible, include information on all the important commodities produced in the area served by the radio station rather than be confined to the reports of any one or two divisions of the staff of the Bureau.

COMPARISONS

The following report is not in good radio form:

"Cattle feeding: Developments in the cattle feeding situation during October continue to point to a considerable increase in cattle feeding in the Corn Belt States in the winter and spring of 1937-38 over a year earlier.

"The Bureau of Agricultural Economics reports that shipments of stocker and feeder cattle into the Corn Belt through stockyards markets were about 20 percent larger in October this year than last, but were 10 percent smaller than in 1935 and only about equal to the 5-year October average. Most of the increase in October this year over last year was in the number going into the States west of the Mississippi River, largely into Iowa and Nebraska.

"For the 4 months, July through October, shipments from stockyards into the Corn Belt States were 15 percent larger this year than in 1936, the same as in 1935 and 6 percent larger than the 5-year average. The proportion of these shipments going into the States east of the Mississippi River was much the largest on record, and the total number was also the largest. For the 5 years prior to the 1934 drought, the number going into the Eastern Corn Belt was 29 percent of the total, while this year it was nearly 50 percent."

Revised it might be given over the radio this way:

"Today I am going to report on the cattle and lamb feeding situation for the month of October. Are the farmers going to feed more or fewer cattle and lambs this winter? What kind of cattle are going on the farms? Into what States are these cattle going? And what are the reasons?

"The Bureau of Agricultural Economics tells us that the developments last month make it quite plain that the farmers of the Corn Belt States are going to feed a good many more cattle during the coming winter and spring than they did last winter and last spring.

"One of the things that provide a guide as to the number of cattle that the farmers in the Corn Belt States will feed is the reports of ship-

ments of stocker and feeder cattle through the stockyards. This year the shipments through the stockyards during October were one-fifth larger (about 20 percent) than during October 1936. In other words, they are about equal to the average for the past 5 years. But last year they were somewhat smaller than the average of the last 5 years. Most of the increase in October this year over past year was in the number going on to farms west of the Mississippi, particularly farms in Iowa and Nebraska.

"Looking back over the last 4 months--that's July through October--the shipments into the Corn Belt States were 15 percent larger than last year and 6 percent above the average. I just said that during October the shipments were mostly to farms west of the Mississippi River, but for the 4-month period the farmers east of the river received both the largest percentage and the - etc., etc."

The following report is not in good radio form:

"Strictly good, Choice and Prime steers and long yearlings open slow, weak; other grades steady but rather slow and uneven; early top \$16.50, several loads held higher; she stock steady to strong; bulls 15 to 25 cents higher; vealers 50 cents up."

Revised it might be given this way:

"Prices for Strictly Good, Choice, and Prime grades of steers and long yearlings were uneven this morning, ranging from unchanged to 25 cents lower. The highest price for early sales was \$16.50. Trading was slow and weak but several loads of livestock were being held for higher prices than buyers were offering. The prices for cow stock were unchanged, but the undertone was steady to strong. Prices of bulls advanced 15 to 25 cents per 100 pounds, while vealers were up 50 cents."

Finally Remember:

If you are presenting the broadcasts, it usually pays to go over the copy carefully, "penciling" the points that need special emphasis.

Keep in touch with the listener. This is the only way to determine the effectiveness of your market-news broadcast, for the listener is the only one who can tell you what is the best time, content, and station for him and his business.

GLOSSARY OF COMMON RADIO TERMS

Continuity: Although this term is loosely used, it is most generally applied to that part of the text read by the announcer, such as - the opening, introduction of speakers or music, closing, etc. It really means to continue, to keep the program on the air and going smoothly. "Continuity" is sometimes used to mean all of the material to be broadcast, that of the speakers plus the announcer's part. In the case of a market news broadcast, strictly speaking, the continuity is that part spoken by the announcer at the opening and close of the program.

Script: Text of the program, although it is frequently referred to as "continuity." In a broad sense "script" covers all of the material in the broadcast; it lists the speakers or actors and the lines they will say. It may also include directions for production manager and actors as an aid in interpretation of the ideas of the author. When applied to market news broadcasts, "script" would mean the market news information itself.

Ad Lib: Impromptu speaking.

Level: When the engineer in charge of the broadcast says that he wants to get a "level" it means that he wants a test of the speaker's voice for tone and volume to determine the proper distance from the microphone for best listening qualities.

Read-y: A quality of unnaturalness by an actor or speaker giving the listener the feeling that he is reading rather than speaking.

Accent: A change of emphasis in a sentence or group of sentences, necessary for shade of meaning, relief from monotony, and for quality of speech.

Show: An entire broadcast.

Network show: A program broadcast simultaneously over two or more stations.

Local: A program broadcast over a single station.

Commercial: A program paid for by an advertiser. This includes payment for radio time, talent, and continuity.

Participating (commercial): A program on which more than one advertiser buys time. Many cooking-school programs are run on this basis.

Sustaining Show: A program without revenue to the radio station for time on the air.

REMEMBER THE LISTENER

You can't put facts across to a person by talking to him in French - if he doesn't understand French.

Most of your radio listeners do not fully understand the specialized language of the traders in the market place and of the economic analysts in Government and business. Therefore you are making it hard for many listeners when you phrase your reports in the language of the specialist.

Your listener does not have the opportunity of "re-reading" the sentence. He can't interrupt you and ask, "What do you mean by that?"

So, present the facts simply and clearly. And to do so you must get away from the abstract. Tell your story of what happened on the farms, the railroads, the highways, in the markets, in terms of men growing apples, potatoes, wheat, cattle, hogs, cotton, sending their products to elevators, storage houses, stockyards; in words that tell of men buying and selling in the wholesale markets and on the exchanges, and receiving dollars and cents for each bushel, bag, or pound.

In brief, test each word to make sure that every listener will understand it to mean what you intend it to mean.

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